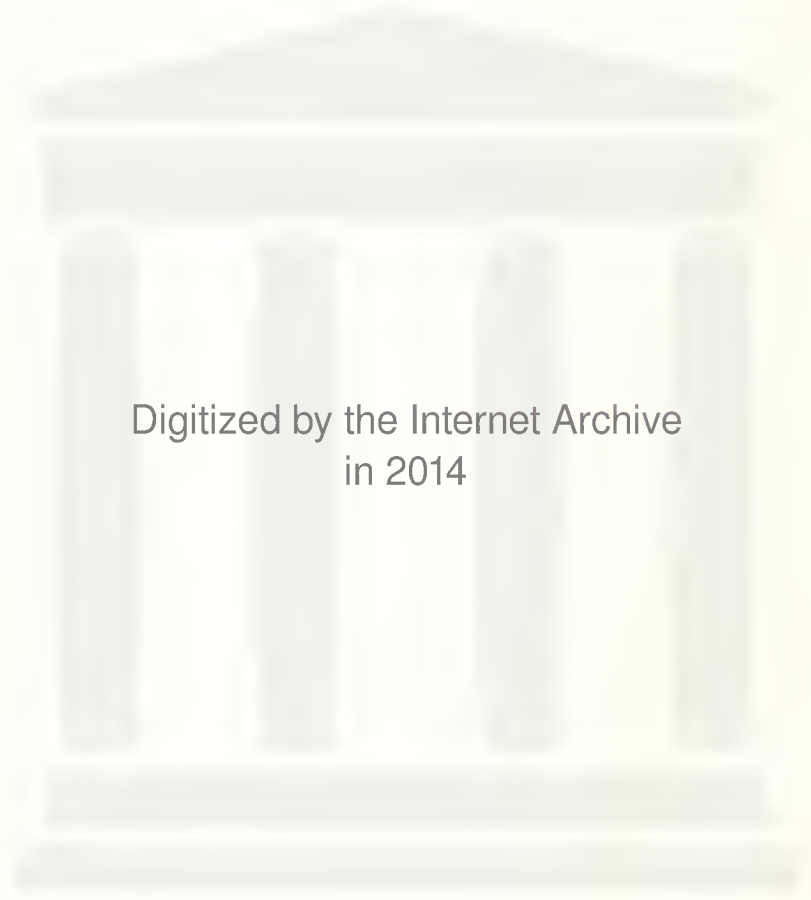

THE WORLD CRISIS

OF

1914–1918

AN INTERPRETATION

BEING

THE RHODES MEMORIAL LECTURES

DELIVERED IN 1929

BY

ELIE HALÉVY

OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
1930

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
AMEN HOUSE, E.C. 4
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW
LEIPZIG NEW YORK TORONTO
MELBOURNE CAPETOWN BOMBAY
CALCUTTA MADRAS SHANGHAI
HUMPHREY MILFORD
PUBLISHER TO THE
UNIVERSITY

Printed in Great Britain

CONTENTS

LECTURE I

LECTURE I

ALLOW me, before I begin, to express to you my feelings of gratitude. That the University of Oxford should have made me, three years ago, an honorary Doctor of Letters, that the Rhodes Trustees should have made me their Memorial Lecturer for the year—such honours heaped upon me make me feel, I assure you, more modest than proud; they do not induce me to think myself a greater man than I am. My work has been a work of patience: my patience you have meant to reward. You will readily understand how high a value an historian of the English people must set upon this reward, coming as it does from the very centre of English learning. He accepts it as something more than a reward for his past work; he accepts it as an encouragement for the future. For his work is far from having come to its end. Whether he will ever be able to finish it depends upon his being favoured with the requisite strength and health and freedom from anxieties, blessings that it is not in your power to bestow on him. But it requires also self-confidence and continued patience. These you can and do provide him with, for which he thanks you heartily.

But it is not only on my own behalf that I wish to express my gratitude to you; it is also on behalf of my native country, France. The first Rhodes Memorial Lecturer was a Canadian statesman, one of the leading figures of the British Commonwealth of nations. The second was an eminent American scientist, who

belonged, if not to that Commonwealth, at all events to what might be called the Commonwealth of the English-speaking nations. But you have now remembered that this is the century of the League of Nations. You have thought that it might be well if you looked for a third lecturer outside the circle of the English-speaking world. Cecil Rhodes, who, if he was anything, was a man of imagination, would have certainly approved of the idea. And finally, having taken this decision, you have invited a Frenchman to come; for which, again, I thank you. Your purpose has been to give the Entente its true interpretation, not as a passing diplomatic contrivance, but as something more lasting, because more spiritual, not founded, let us hope, upon fear of a common enemy, but upon the more positive qualities of charity, hope, and faith. Charity towards mankind as a whole, Hope in the future welfare of the human race, Faith in the possibility of furthering, through co-operation between nations, the cause of knowledge and culture, of everything that the eighteenth century, the most Anglo-French century in history, called by a fine name, 'enlightenment'—Les Lumières.

It is in this philosophical spirit that I mean to approach my difficult subject. I shall not deal with individuals. I shall not dwell upon the story of the last week before the War, dramatic as it is. I shall disregard the suggestions made retrospectively by a host of well-meaning critics, as to what such and such a Sovereign, or Prime Minister, or Foreign Secretary,

should, on this particular day, at this or that particular hour, have done or not done, said or not said, in order to prevent the War. Pills to cure an earthquake! The object of my study is the earthquake itself. I shall attempt to define the collective forces, the collective feelings and movements of public opinion, which, in the early years of the twentieth century, made for strife. I say purposely 'strife', not 'war', because the world-crisis of 1914–18 was not only a war—the war of 1914—but a revolution—the revolution of 1917. It may therefore be well for me, at the outset, to draw your attention to some aspects of those two important notions—'war' and 'revolution'.

My first point will be that there is a striking resemblance between the two notions. Suppose there is, at a given period, a fairly complete equilibrium between the political and the economic condition of a nation; that the distribution of political power among the several classes within the nation corresponds substantially to the distribution of economic power. Suppose, then, that, while the distribution of political power remains the same, and cannot by any normal means be readjusted to meet altered circumstances, the distribution of economic power is greatly altered. Suppose, for example, that the bourgeoisie, as in eighteenth-century France, acquires an immense increase of economic and cultural power without any corresponding increase of political power. There will come a strong temptation, almost as irresistible as a law of nature, for the class that is at a political

disadvantage to resort to violence and revolution, until a new equilibrium is reached. Suppose, again, that, at a given time, the territorial distribution of the soil of Europe among the nations corresponds approximately to their respective military, economic, and cultural strength, and is in substantial harmony with the sentiments of the large majority of the subjects of each state. But suppose that, presently, one nation is found to have gained immensely in military or economic strength at the expense of one or many of the others; or that, within the limits of one or more nations, new nationalities have become self-conscious and wish to express themselves as independent States For such a disturbance of equilibrium man has not as yet discovered any method of peaceful adjustment. It can be rectified only by an outburst of violence—called, in this instance, not a revolution, but a war —to be followed by the establishment of a new equilibrium of a more or less lasting character.

In the second place, just because the notions of war and revolution are closely allied, it is often difficult to distinguish between a revolution and a war. A nation, Ireland or Poland, which has been absorbed into an Empire, wishes to assert itself as an independent State, and rises in arms against those who are, according to the written constitution, its legitimate masters. Should this rising of a nascent nation be called a revolution, or a national war? Or again, a revolution may extend beyond the narrow limits of the country where it began. French armies, for example, in 1792 and the following years appeared in Belgium and the

Rhineland, and were everywhere acclaimed by the democratic party, while their opponents fled for their lives. Was this a war, in the purely military meaning of the word, or the propagation of a revolution?

It is thus apparent why all great convulsions in the history of the world, and more particularly in modern Europe, have been at the same time wars and revolutions. The Thirty Years' War was at once a revolutionary crisis, a conflict, within Germany, between the rival parties of Protestants and Catholics, and an international war between the Holy Roman Empire, Sweden, and France. The Great War (as, until quite lately, it used to be described in England) which lasted from 1792 to 1815, having begun as a social revolution in France, became a war which spread throughout Europe, until national revolutions, or wars, recoiling against France, drove her back, after one of the most amazing successions of triumphs and disasters in history, within her former limits. The last great and greater war, which is my present subject, has similar characteristics. I shall therefore, in my first lecture, define what the forces were which, at the beginning of the century, made for revolution. I shall define, in my second lecture, what the forces were which made for war. I shall then endeavour, in my third and concluding lecture, to show how a knowledge of the two sets of forces may help us to unravel the tangled plot of the Four Years' World-Crisis.

What were the collective forces that made for revolution? One word sums them up, a word in

world-wide use, 'Socialism', which is the easier to define since its meaning has, so to speak, crystallized into a single doctrine. A man, who, whatever we think of his teaching, was certainly a man of genius, the most internationally minded of all internationalists, had founded his system upon his thorough knowledge of the dialectical method of Hegel and his German followers of the Left, of French Socialism, and of English economics. It may be well to recall, however briefly, the essence of Karl Marx's doctrine. The main feature of modern civilization, as he sees it, is the class-war, the war between capitalists and wage-earners. The capitalists own all the means of production; they are in a minority, and an ever-dwindling minority, it being the law of industrial competition that the smaller concerns are always defeated by, and absorbed into, the larger. Their function is a beneficent one, inasmuch as, through their power of organization, they have increased, to an almost incredible degree, the wealth-producing power of mankind. But they have not fulfilled this beneficent function for the immediate benefit of mankind, taken as a whole. They have fulfilled it through the methodical exploitation, oppression, and pauperization of the wage-earners. Mankind will only take its revenge on the day, which is bound to come, and the coming of which capitalism is unconsciously preparing, when the exploited masses will have become such a crushing majority, as compared with the constantly diminishing, and finally insignificant, number of their exploiters, that they will find it easy, at the

cost of a supreme upheaval, to come at last into their inheritance, to get control of the concentrated industries, and work them henceforward, not for the profit of the few, but for the benefit of all.

The doctrine of Karl Marx has always struck me as unfair, because it directs the hatred of the multitude against that particular class of capitalists, the captains of industry, whose activity has been the most positively beneficent, to the exclusion of many more parasitic forms of capitalism. But it is easy to understand why it made a powerful appeal to the emotions of the working masses. It fitted in exactly with the conditions that prevailed in the newly industrialized districts of Western Europe. There, huge masses of suddenly congregated wage-earners faced minorities of arrogant task-masters, monopolizers of wealth, upstarts of industry. The doctrine provided them with reasons for hating those whom they hated instinctively. Little by little, it was forgotten that there had been Socialists in France and England before Karl Marx had begun to write. 'Marxism' and 'Socialism' became synonymous words.

This development was especially pronounced in the leading European country, Germany. There a powerful party had been expressly based upon orthodox Marxism; and Socialists in the neighbouring countries had been working, more or less successfully, to imitate the German 'Social-Democratic' Party, just as soldiers, industrialists, and social reformers had done their best to imitate the methods of German militarism, German industrial organization, and German

social legislation. The Social-Democratic Party had first been founded in 1875 under another name, with a still indefinite programme and imperfect organization. Then it had undergone a long ordeal, lasting over ten years, of Bismarckian persecution. But from this ordeal it had emerged triumphant, at the moment when Bismarck was dismissed by the young William the Second, and a new régime of toleration began for the Social Democrats. Already a million and a half electors voted for the Social-Democratic candidates; a figure of three millions was reached at the General Election of 1905; the fourth million in 1912. Here was a great country, the greatest country in Europe, with more than four million voters eager to send to the Reichstag members of a party whose programme was strictly revolutionary.

Now, the constant and impressive growth of the German Marxist party raises an important problem. There have never been, in any great country, four million revolutionists; there certainly were not in Germany, when the twentieth century began, four million enemies of religion, conscious antipatriots, eager for the rapid abolition of private property. What the Social-Democratic Party did, was to provide an outlet for discontents of all kinds and of all degrees of intensity; and it only succeeded in doing so, and in keeping together such a huge and mixed body of extremists and moderates of many sorts, through a clever use of the Marxian doctrine itself. For, if Marxism is in its very essence revolutionary,

the leaders of German Social Democracy always reminded their followers that it was also a fatalistic doctrine. Socialism was bound to come, but only at the time when the natural process of capitalistic concentration had reached its ultimate development. Then the catastrophe would happen; but it would be dangerous and absurd to anticipate the date and mislead the masses into premature insurrection, which could result in nothing but failure. Thus did the German Social Democrats play a clever and successful game, constantly making new recruits, constantly teaching them patience at the same time as hope, pursuing a policy not so much of revolutionary action as of revolutionary expectation, a policy of waiting.

But the game was a difficult one, and after the General Election of 1912 the question had arisen how long the Party, numerically formidable as it had become, could continue to play it. It is legitimate for historians to ask, whether one of the reasons—we are far from saying the main reason—why the German military aristocracy decided, in July 1914, to run the risks of a great European war was not a growing sense of discomfort under the increasing pressure of Social Democracy, and a surmise that a bold attempt to give a set-back to Socialism, by asserting themselves once more as the party of war and victory, might prove the wisest course. There was indeed something paradoxical in the structure of the German Empire. Here was a highly industrialized country, the most highly industrialized of all the nations on the Continent, subjected to a political régime of feudalism and

absolutism. Here was an Empire founded, in 1866 and 1871, upon the basis of manhood suffrage, but in which Prussia, the leading State within its boundaries, was condemned to an electoral system that was a mere travesty of democratic institutions; in which ministers were responsible not to the elective assembly but to the hereditary sovereign; in which a minister was not regarded as having even a right to resign, but must wait until it pleased the King and Emperor to dismiss him. Here was one of those cases of apparently precarious equilibrium which demand a revolution; and, since the only party in the State that stood for democracy pure and simple was at the same time a socialistic party, it is difficult to see how the political crisis could fail to be attended by some social upheaval.

We shall see by and by how both these things happened. Nobody, however, would have been prepared to say during the years immediately preceding 1914 that Germany was the centre of the European revolutionary spirit. The revolutionary centres of Europe had to be sought elsewhere, westward and eastward, in France and in Russia.

Let us begin with France. The political and social conditions that prevailed here were very different from those which prevailed in Germany. When the twentieth century opened, manhood suffrage had been established in France for more than half a century. France had been, nominally, even under the Second Empire—since that Empire was a monarchy

founded on a plebiscite—and after 1871, in reality, a country where all administrative and legislative functions depended directly or indirectly upon popular election. With what results? When they considered the results, revolutionists could not help feeling bitterly disappointed. They saw revolutionary Socialists, once admitted into a democratically elected Chamber of Deputies, become Parliamentarians instead of Revolutionists, political Radicals instead of Socialists, and, too frequently, Moderates instead of Radicals. They noticed that Bismarck's social monarchy had provided the working classes with more effective laws of protection against the risks of industrial life than had French Radicalism. They wondered whether these failures of French democracy were not inherent in the very nature of democracy. Electioneering involves catering for votes of all kinds—even bourgeois votes. Membership of Parliament entails concern in a mass of questions—national, diplomatic, military, religious—that have nothing to do with the purely economic problem of the welfare of the working classes. Hence the rise of a new doctrine, called Syndicalism, which really opened a new era in the history of Socialism, and which has only lacked, in order to be appreciated at its full value, a prophet of the calibre of Karl Marx. The Syndicalists condemned as barren what they called the indirect action of the State; they forbade trade union leaders to seek admission to democratically elected Assemblies in the fond hope of acting indirectly, through State interference, upon the employers of labour. If these

leaders really meant to remain in contact with labour and faithful to the militant spirit of the class-war, their duty was consistently to ignore politics and stick to the method of 'direct action' against the employers. Let the workmen, by persistent pressure on the capitalists, exerted in workshop and factory, through collective bargaining, boycotts, and strikes, conquer higher wages, shorter hours, more control over the conditions of labour and the management of industry itself; let them group their trade unions, or *syndicats*, into federations coextensive with the nation, and these federations into one single federation of all trade unions, the 'Confédération générale du travail', endowed with executive powers. The day would come when, after a final revolutionary general strike, the General Confederation of Labour would achieve the annihilation of capitalism and become a pure industrial democracy, a society of producers, divested of all the political functions which appertained to the military State of the past.

Our picture of French revolutionary Syndicalism is, however, not yet complete. A schoolmaster in Burgundy, by name Gustave Hervé, started another school of revolutionary tactics, which came to be more or less completely adopted by the Syndicalist extremists. His formula was the military strike, the strike of soldiers against their officers; and, so long as he confined himself to persuading soldiers that they should decline to act as strike-breakers, there was undoubtedly a close resemblance between his ideas and those of revolutionary Syndicalism. But he went

further, and advised the soldiers if ever war came to be declared not to act the part of conscientious objectors and, in a Tolstoian spirit, merely decline to fight: he wanted them to retain the weapons that circumstances placed in their hands, and, instead of making war, turn them against the government of their own country, against militarism, patriotism, and capitalism. This was a notion that had very little resemblance to the syndicalist notion of a strike; it reminds us rather of the old formula of the 'Jacobin' or 'Blanquist' *coup de main* upon the central organs of government, in order to force a revolution upon a nation through the political action of the State. But the fact was that both notions appealed to extremists, and also that the word 'strike' was used in both connexions, so that it often became difficult to distinguish 'Hervéism' from 'Syndicalism'. The double programme of a general strike of workmen and soldiers was indeed to be applied, and succeed, as we shall see, in another country than France. But it was in France, during the last ten years of the nineteenth century and the first ten years of the twentieth century, that the scheme was conceived.

It was no sooner conceived than it spread like wildfire to many countries outside France. It spread to Spain and Italy, where orthodox Marxism had always found it difficult to hold its own against more revolutionary forms of Socialism, and had often been compelled to come to terms with them. It became particularly vehement in Italy at the time of the Tripoli War, towards the end of 1911. A brilliant

agitator successfully organized a general strike of the whole body of workmen in the town of Forlì, which lasted several days, as a protest against the war. He thus came to the front, and was soon afterwards promoted to the post of editor of the important Roman Socialist paper, the *Avanti*; he gave it a distinctly revolutionary tone, and largely increased its sale. His name was Benito Mussolini.

Syndicalism spread also to the Anglo-Saxon world. It spread to the United States, where the so-called 'Industrial Workers of the World' propagated, among the masses of the unskilled proletarians, the idea of the revolutionary strike, as against the ultra-moderate methods of the 'American Federation of Labour'. The 'Industrial Workers of the World' in their turn found imitators in Australia, where Labour Governments were getting into trouble with their workmen, and where the discontented workmen were glad to find in Syndicalism a useful weapon with which to fight their Governments. Here two Englishmen, Ben Tillett and Tom Mann, came into contact with the Syndicalist agitators. They had been, twenty years before, active revolutionists in London, had failed to accomplish their designs, and had left their country in disgust. They now became converts to the new doctrine, and brought it back to England, which it had already begun to permeate more directly from across the Channel. In the critical summer of 1911, when the 'Die-Hards' were fighting in the last ditch against the Parliament Bill, when the *Panther* was at anchor before the Moroccan harbour of Agadir, and

the British Government really believed in the possibility of an immediate war with Germany, Ben Tillett and Tom Mann became the leaders of a series of big strikes among transport workers and railwaymen, strikes that contained an element of violence quite new in England and bore the mark of a foreign influence. Then came, in the following winter, the general strike of the miners, and in 1913 the general strikes in South Africa and Dublin, which so strangely and unexpectedly cut across the feud between English and Dutch overseas, between Protestant and Catholic in Ireland. Then followed, during the first months of 1914, the new move among transport workers, railwaymen, and miners towards the formation of what was called the 'Triple Industrial Alliance', designed to exert a joint pressure upon the associations of their respective employers and eventually to organize the General Strike. Of course, their aspirations were not the same as those of the continental extremists and utopians. Their very definite objects were their immediate interests—higher wages, shorter hours, and recognition of the trade unions. The situation was nevertheless alarming: the nation was facing a situation approaching in gravity the crisis that was not reached until 1926, after years of trouble and suspense.

Still more serious was the position in the east of Europe, if Russia may be really considered as part of Europe. But you must not expect me to dwell, in this connexion, on the history of the beginnings of Bolshevism before the War. Suffice it to say that there was, from 1903 onwards, a Bolshevist Party; but it

was a small party—one-half of the Social-Democratic Party; and the Russian Social-Democratic Party was very far from forming the whole of the Russian Socialist movement. I compare the influence of the Social Democrats (Bolsheviks and Mensheviks combined) in the revolutionary movement to that of the Baltic Barons in the reactionary circles. The Baltic Barons were a German, an exotic element: their aim and function was to introduce the orderly, if brutal, methods of German bureaucracy into a semi-Asiatic, inefficient, anarchical, and corrupt society. The Russian Social Democrats were likewise an exotic element: they were adepts of Marxist Socialism and admirers of German science, conscious enemies, as the Baltic Barons were, of eastern nonchalance and inefficiency. They understood, and explained, that the time had not yet come for a Socialist revolution in Russia. The country, according to Marx's philosophy of progress, had first to go through a long and painful process of westernization and industrialization. Not so the really powerful, and authentically Russian, Social-Revolutionary Party. They despised the west and thought it the legitimate pride of Russia that the evils of industrialism and competitive civilization were unknown to her. Their Socialism was agrarian. They believed that whereas western Socialists were inventing complicated and pedantic systems in order to escape the horrors of factory life without abolishing the factory, the Russian Moujik, in the simplicity of his primitive mind, had hit upon the true formula of unadulterated communism. The

Mir, the village community, had only to be maintained, or restored where it was in risk of being destroyed by the impact of western individualism, for the social question to be solved. As to the methods to be used, the Social Revolutionaries condoned, if they did not actually encourage, the anarchist method of terrorism and wholesale assassination. Not the murder of this or that particular statesman, in order to put another more popular man in his place, but the murder of official after official, indiscriminately, so as to throw the whole of society into a state of constant panic, dislocate the machinery of government, and prepare the advent of universal liberty through universal anarchy.

In fact a revolution had already occurred in Russia, a most formidable revolution, in 1905–6, at the end of the disastrous war with Japan. It had looked for a time as if Tsarism would be unable to weather the storm. But the storm had been weathered after all. And it is a legitimate question whether the revolutionary movement in Russia did not reach its climax about 1905 and subside afterwards. Perhaps also the Syndicalist agitation, which raged in France between 1906 and 1910, was only the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, just as the English agitation of 1911 was only the aftermath of the French upheaval. No definite statement on such points is possible; but certainly no responsible statesman would have said, at the beginning of 1914, that he felt safe against the perils of some kind of revolutionary outburst. In Russia the recent assassination of Stolypin was a

dangerous symptom; so was the big strike that broke out in the streets of St. Petersburg, just as President Poincaré was paying a State visit to the Tsar, in July 1914. Hervéism was still rampant in the rank and file of the French army: in England, the Industrial Triple Alliance was openly preparing to blackmail the community into submitting to its claims. 'Beware,' Sir Edward Grey warns Count Mensdorf on the 23rd July 1914; 'a war would be accompanied or followed by a complete collapse of European credit and industry. In these days, in great industrial States, this would mean a state of things worse than that of 1848.' [1] 'Beware,' Lord Morley a few days later warns his colleagues, 'in the present temper of Labour, this tremendous dislocation of industrial life must be fraught with public danger. The atmosphere of war cannot be friendly to order, in a democratic system that is verging on the humour of '48.' [2] In 1848 a revolution had begun in Paris that spread through the whole west of the Continent and was altogether republican and socialistic in character. But what now happened was not a revolution but a war; not even, as in 1789, a revolution followed by wars, but a war that, for a time at least, threw the revolutionary peril into the background. Hence we are entitled to conclude that, powerful as were the forces which, in pre-war Europe, made for revolution, the forces that made for war were still more powerful.

[1] *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, vol. xi, p. 70.

[2] Viscount Morley, *Memorandum on Resignation*, August 1914, p. 5.

LECTURE II

LECTURE II

HAVING made an attempt, in our first lecture, to define the collective forces which, before the beginning of the world-crisis of 1914, made for revolution, let us try to define those which made for war.

The so-called 'economic', or 'materialist', philosophy of history suggests a first interpretation. We should, if we adhered to this philosophy, regard the collective forces that made for war in the light of an economic phenomenon. The structure of a capitalistic society is such, we should say, that, in a given nation, the home market is unable to absorb the whole produce of the nation's industry; if it could do so, this would mean that wages were sufficient to purchase the entire produce of labour, since wage-earners of all grades form the vast majority of the nation. But if that were so, where would the capitalist find his profit? The profit-seeking instinct will therefore compel him to look for foreign markets, among nations less industrially developed than his own. As these other nations become, one after another, more industrialized, he will find new outlets for his goods in the non-civilized parts of the world, fit for colonization, but not for immigration. But the time will presently come when many nations will be competing for these colonial markets, and the world will have become too small for the scramble. Hence war, the natural result of industrial over-production and international competition.

I am no believer in the materialist conception of history. This is, of course, not the place for a philosophical discussion of the subject, which, in order to be thorough, would require not one lecture but a whole course of lectures. I shall only draw your attention to a few facts, belonging to the period immediately before the War, which I believe will convince you how little this theory accounts for the real course of history.

The danger-spot in Europe, from 1904 to 1911, was assuredly Morocco, the field of a keen competition between France, whose rights were upheld by England, and Germany. Was it a case of French capitalism versus German capitalism? In 1909 the two Governments came to an agreement: some kind of political preponderance in Morocco was allowed to France, and the French and the Germans agreed to exploit in common the natural resources of north-west Africa. This agreement met with no opposition from the magnates of industry in the two countries. Behind the diplomatic document there was a pact of alliance between the great Krupp firm and the Schneider firm, the great industrial houses that provided their respective countries, in the Ruhr and at the Creusot, with their military armaments. The agreement of 1909 broke down, in France at any rate, because of the fierce resistance of the French nationalists, who thought it too international, and of the French Socialists, who thought it too capitalistic. Here therefore we find industrialism making for peace between France and Germany, defeated only by other

forces, non-economic in their nature and stronger than industrialism.

The agreement broke down. A French army marched upon Fez. Germany sent a war-ship to Agadir. It looked as if Germany wanted war, and was armed and ready for immediate war. Suddenly, the German Government dropped the greater part of its African claims, and accepted a very moderate compromise. It is generally admitted that this unexpected change of attitude was due to the fact that, just when war was in sight, there was a panic on the Berlin Stock Exchange, and the German Government was assailed by terror-stricken stockbrokers, merchants, and industrialists, who explained that war spelt ruin for them and disaster for the country as a whole. Once more capitalism meant peace; this time capitalism was the more powerful force and averted war.

But those who uphold the economic theory of the origins of the War are also those who think of it as having been mainly a war between England and Germany. What, then, of the relations between England and Germany? Is it true that, as many Socialists on the Continent used to say, the English capitalists, the merchants in the city, wanted war? What strikes the impartial observer is, on the contrary, a constant and eager yearning after peace on the part of the mercantile and industrial community. 'Trade follows the flag' may have been a popular motto a few years before, at a time when, oddly enough, the English imperialists favoured an alliance with England's chief

competitor in the markets of the world, Germany. But now the popular motto was that 'war did not pay'. A clever and clear-headed writer, in a book whose sale in England and out of England was enormous, set himself to dispel 'the optical illusion', 'the Great Illusion', according to which it was possible to make money out of a victorious war. It had perhaps been possible in primitive stages of society, when the conqueror could enslave the individual members of a defeated tribe. But, in a modern world, based upon exchange, the victor could not even extract tribute from the vanquished without running a great risk of ruining, not the latter, but himself. This theory made headway among the merchants and financiers. On the very eve of the War, we see bankers, stockbrokers, leaders of the cotton, steel, and coal industries, crowding into the room of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and expressing terror at the prospect of England's drifting into the conflict.

However, the conflict came, and England plunged into it; and these facts raise a problem as to the value of Norman Angell's type of pacifism. For, whereas the upholders of the economic theory of the causes of war believed that, just on account of its highly industrialized structure, the western world was heading towards an inevitable and imminent war, Norman Angell, on the contrary, because he thought that the commercial structure of Western Europe made for peace, believed in the permanent stability of a peace that had already lasted forty years. Are we not therefore entitled to declare that the facts have very rapidly

belied his theory? Did not the three great capitalistic nations of Western Europe, only four years after Norman Angell's optimistic prophecies, actually go to war? To this question my answer will be the further question: 'Did they? Did Germany, France, and England go to war?' Or perhaps I may put my question in a less paradoxical form, and ask: 'Supposing Germany, France, and England had, by themselves, made up the whole world; supposing there had been, on the surface of the globe, only these three nations, and the deep sea all round them, would they have gone to war?'

There is perhaps something to be said in favour of a theory current before the War, according to which the system of 'armed peace', resting as it did upon compulsory military service and manhood suffrage, contributed, ruinous though it was, to the maintenance of peace, since those ultimately responsible for the declaration of war were also those who would have to face all the risks of the war, when once it was declared. On many occasions, indeed, during the forty odd years that followed the Franco-German War of 1870, it had seemed that Germany and France, or France and England, or France, England, and Germany, had reached the very brink of war. Sometimes one nation had suffered a severe diplomatic reverse; sometimes a compromise had been patched up; always the rival nations had stopped short of coming to blows and slaughter. By about 1914 the strain of the situation was certainly becoming intolerable, and doubt whether peace could long be maintained was

widespread. But why did the German Government in 1913 decide in favour of that formidable increase of their military strength, which seemed, at last, to make war inevitable? The decision had nothing to do either with the naval competition between Germany and England, or with the quarrels between Germany and France about Morocco or about Alsace. What decided the German Government to prepare for an eventual European War was a crisis that was brewing, not in the highly industrialized and capitalistic West, but among the primitive communities of the south-east of Europe. War came to the West from the East; it was forced upon the West by the East.

Peace hinged, all through the interval between the Prussian wars of the sixties and the Great War of 1914, upon the relations of Germany and Russia. There was an old tradition of intimacy between the courts of St. Petersburg and Berlin, which was completed in the days of the 'Holy Alliance' by an intimacy with Austria. This conspiracy between three autocratic monarchies was hated and deemed 'unholy' by all Liberals in the West. But it undoubtedly made for peace. The three monarchs had never forgotten the Jacobin wars of conquest of the last years of the eighteenth century; they felt—not mistakenly—that revolution and war are two very closely allied notions; they considered their alliance as a system of mutual insurance against the peril of revolution and war. The system endured down to the very eve of the War of 1914 in attenuated and modified forms. Bismarck added to his alliance with Austria an alliance with

Russia. When he fell, the treaty of alliance with Russia was not renewed; but, after a very short interval, the friendship between Germany and Russia became once more so close that it practically amounted to an alliance. The conclusion of the 'Entente' between England and France, directed against Germany, did not, in spite of France being Russia's ally, make Russia's relations with Germany cooler. The Russo-German friendship even survived the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, a very artificial and superficial *rapprochement*, which did not prevent Russia from concluding with Germany, in 1910–11, at the very time of the Agadir crisis, an arrangement concerning the Baghdad railway, amounting to a Russo-German entente in the Middle East. The breach only occurred in 1912. And what was its cause? Was the breach an effect of rival dynastic purposes? Nobody in St. Petersburg dreamt of conquering German territory; neither did anybody in Berlin dream of aggrandizing Germany at the expense of Russia. The two Governments had, in this respect, only one common purpose, which was to keep Poland in a state of disruption and subjection. What happened, from the end of 1912 onwards, was that both Governments were carried away by great waves of collective feeling. To understand the nature of these collective forces, which were the real cause of the Great War, you must allow me to carry you farther into the East, into the Far East of Asia.

An epoch-making event happened in 1905, when

Japan destroyed the Russian fleet, defeated on land the Russian army, and expelled Russia from the coast of the gulf of Petchili. The Russo-Japanese War sent a thrill through the whole Asiatic continent. It now appeared that the Europeans were not the demigods they believed themselves to be, and had so long, by armed pressure, compelled the whole non-European world to believe them. At last the East was asserting itself against the West, and shaking the yoke of the white European. Let us not attempt to translate the fact into the phraseology of historical materialism. This was not a case of Japanese capitalism fighting Russian capitalism. The quarrel was between nation and nation, culture and culture. The basis of history is idealistic, not materialistic; and idealism makes revolutions and wars.

There was, however, one difference between Japan and the rest of Asia. A feudal aristocracy, a military monarchy, had always known how to keep Japan free from invasion. Everywhere else effete aristocracies and corrupt monarchies had allowed themselves to be conquered by European armies or bought by European gold. It was therefore impossible that the peoples in Asia should turn to their aristocracies and monarchies for help against Western oppression. They had to rely upon themselves, and do what, at that very moment, as an after-effect of the defeat of their armies in Manchuria, the Russians, themselves a semi-Asiatic people, were doing, revolt against their rulers, and save the nation by the introduction of free institutions. We thus observe in Asia, during the last

ten years before the War, a renascence of those ideas of militant liberalism and democratic nationalism which, during the first half of the nineteenth century, had played so important a part in the history of Europe. In Europe, at the beginning of the twentieth century, one might have been tempted to call those ideas old-fashioned, for international socialism paid only lip-service to the principle of nationality. But in Asia, just at this time, they began again to shake the world.

The revolutionary movement compelled the Imperial Government in China, as early as 1906, to promise political and administrative reforms, and to prepare the draft of a Constitution. It became more intense after the death, natural or otherwise, in 1908, of the Empress-dowager. In March 1911 the Monarchy accepted the principle of a responsible Cabinet. In 1912, a year after the Emperor had abdicated, the Republic was proclaimed. Thus it was that in the Far East the most ancient of the great military monarchies in the world fell to the ground.

In India there had already existed, during the previous twenty years, a National Congress which had as its programme Home Rule for India, to be obtained by peaceful propaganda and legal means. But the Indian nationalist movement took a more revolutionary form after the victory of Japan and the Russian Revolution. Gandhi, undoubtedly inspired by the teachings of Tolstoy, preached passive resistance to the orders of an alien government; and then, in conjunction with Tilak, a boycott of European

merchants and European goods. The boycott rapidly degenerated into more violent forms of aggression, including bomb-throwing after the Russian model. In 1907 the revolutionists swamped the National Congress; and the British Government, realizing at last the seriousness of the movement, adopted a policy of concession. Two natives were admitted into the Executive Council of the Viceroy, and elected members were admitted into the Legislative Council of the Viceroy and the Provincial Legislative Councils.

In Persia, as early as 1906, the Shah, accused of selling his country to Russia, was murdered; and his successor was subjected to the control of a popularly elected assembly, or Medjlis. He tried to shake off the yoke, dissolved the Medjlis, and, with the help of a Russian army, besieged the leaders of the nationalist army in Tabriz. He was in his turn deposed; and a new Shah, only twelve years old, was placed once more under the control of the Medjlis. Later on, the reactionaries, under the deposed Shah, and with Russian assistance, were to take their revenge, and finally suppress the Medjlis. Nevertheless we see in Persia the triumph, however precarious, of a party that stood at the same time for political and for national liberty.

In 1908 the agitation reached the Bosphorus and the very borders of Europe. The 'Young Turk' party provoked a military insurrection, and compelled the Sultan to re-establish the Constitution of 1876, based upon a popularly elected Parliament. The object of the so-called 'Union and Progress' Committee, which

carried out the revolution, was to strengthen Turkey by reconstructing it on the Western model, and to transform it into a unified nation, whose inhabitants would be equal citizens, irrespective of race, creed, or language. They did not succeed in strengthening Turkey. Austria annexed Bosnia. Italy annexed Tripoli and the Dodecanese. Then the revolutionary principle of nationality recoiled, so to speak, upon Turkey. An insurrection broke out in Crete, another in Albania. Finally, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria entered a league for the partition of those provinces of the Turkish Empire which they claimed in virtue of the principle of nationality. Thus began, towards the end of 1912, what may be called a war, in so far as it was a struggle between Turkey and four foreign nations, or a revolution, in so far as the inhabitants of Turkey rose in arms, not against the invader, but against the Turkish army. We will pass over the gruesome tale of the two Balkan Wars. Suffice it to say that, by August 1913, the Turkish Empire, so far as its European possessions were concerned, was shattered.

A great historian, Albert Sorel, wrote as early as 1878, the year of the Congress of Berlin: 'Le jour où l'on croira résolue la question d'Orient, l'Europe verra se poser inévitablement la question d'Autriche.' The collapse of the Ottoman Empire had now begun, and the time had come for the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in its turn. The dual monarchy included a majority of alien races subjected to the control of two dominant races, German and

Hungarian. The subject races had already long been restive; and from the moment when the Austrian Government in 1909, and the Hungarian Government in 1911, had granted manhood suffrage to their subjects, both parliaments, in Vienna and Budapest, had become pandemoniums of rival nationalities. Now that the victory of three million emancipated Servians had doubled the territory and population of their country, how could five million Czechs, six million southern Slavs, subjects of Austria and Hungary, refrain from the dream of following their example? Sedition was rife all through the Slavonic parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The Habsburg monarchy was thus confronted with an anxious problem. Should it submit to the coming catastrophe, and passively allow its possessions to be dismembered? or boldly take the initiative, declare war upon Servia, and absorb it into the Slavonic part of the Monarchy, which would thus be transformed from a dual into a triple State, no longer Austrian and Hungarian, but Austrian, Hungarian, and Slavonic? Such a plan was favoured by the military party, which gathered round the heir to the throne, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. But every one knew, who chose to know, that, whenever Austria declared war upon Servia, Pan-Slavist sentiment would become too strong for any Russian Government to resist its pressure. Every one knew, who chose to know, that whenever Russia gave so much as a sign of declaring war upon Austria, Pan-German feelings would compel the German Government to enter the

lists in its turn; and that the Austro-Servian war would become a great struggle for the supremacy of Teuton or Slav throughout Central Europe. It was likewise common knowledge that Germany, whenever she declared war upon Russia, was resolved not to tolerate the existence in the West of an army that was after all the second best army in Europe; that she would first march upon Paris and annihilate France as a military power, before rushing back to the East, and settling matters with Russia. Again, every one knew, who chose to know, that the German General Staff very wisely judged the Franco-German frontier between Luxembourg and Switzerland too narrow for the deployment of the German army, which would have to cross the territory of Belgium if it was to strike the necessary lightning blow at France. And everybody understood that if ever the Belgian coast and the northern coast of France were to fall under the domination of Germany, Great Britain, feeling her prestige and her security in danger, would enter the war on the side of Belgium and France. Every one knew, who wished to know, not only that a European war was imminent, but what the general shape of the war would be.

How, then, should we account for the fact that neither the first nor the second Balkan War degenerated into a general war? England was eager for the maintenance of peace. The German Government was afraid of an Austro-Servian war, which might bring about a breach between Austria and Italy, and dislocate the Triple Alliance. But the main reason

was perhaps that there remained, at the three courts of Berlin, Vienna, and St. Petersburg, enough of the spirit of the 'Holy Alliance' to make the three military Governments feel that a war between them would have the character of fratricidal strife, that it might spell disaster to all three, and that peace was the safest course for the preservation of monarchical order in Europe.

Then, after ten months of peace, came the murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his consort. It was committed in the streets of Serajevo, where the Archduke was paying a visit that was in itself an act of defiance to Servia. Two Bosnian revolutionists were the murderers. Was the murder planned in Bosnia? If so, we may call it indifferently a revolutionary deed, the murder of a tyrant, or the germ of a war of independence. Was it, as is probable, planned in Servia? If so, we may call it either the revolutionary assassination of a would-be tyrant, or the signal for a national war of Servia against the oppressors of Bosnia. One thing, at all events, is certain. The Great War was a war for the liberty of the peoples from its inception: not from the day when German armies violated the neutrality of Belgium—this was only an incident in the course of a war that had already begun—but from the day when, with the murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the insurrection of the southern Slavs began.

It was then that the Central Empires took the responsibility of declaring war upon Servia, Russia, and France. But why did they take this awful

responsibility? The question can be answered only if put in another form. We should ask, not *who*, but *what* was responsible for the three declarations of war; and the answer should be: 'The rotten condition of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the fact that the revolutionary principle of nationality was at work within its limits, and that it was about to break up into a number of independent States.' If so formidable an event as the dismemberment of Austria occurred, nothing short of a miracle could prevent its developing into a general war. European diplomacy did not work the miracle. And there was war.

LECTURE III

LECTURE III

OUR purpose being to understand the causes of the world-crisis of 1914–18, we have focused our attention, not upon the acts of individual statesmen, not upon the incidents of diplomatic history, but upon the general movements of public opinion, upon the collective forces which, before the crisis began, made for strife. We have thus been brought to distinguish between two different species of forces. Some of them set class against class within each nation, or, to speak more accurately, cut across nations, and set class against class all over Europe, irrespective of nationalities. Others were exclusively national, they united all the classes within each nation against all the classes, equally united, within every other nation. Which were the more powerful? From what happened in 1914, it appeared that national warlike emotions influenced the human mind more deeply than international revolutionary emotions. But these latter feelings were only submerged for a time, not annihilated; they were soon to come to the surface again, with an intensity increased by the sufferings of the War. The two played an equally important part in the evolution of the crisis. My aim, in this third and last lecture, is, if not to tell the history of the War, at least to give you some hints towards a new way of approaching its history, through the knowledge of the action and interaction of these forces.

The history of the War I shall divide into two parts,

before and after the Russian Revolution of 1917. The tale of the first part I cannot begin otherwise than by inquiring what happened to the great Napoleonic scheme planned by the German General Staff, with a view to achieving a rapid and crushing victory. The plan failed. It failed in the West at the battle of the Marne. And of course many causes contributed to the French victory of September 1914. The French believed (quite mistakenly, but the belief, although mistaken, was very effective) that a huge Russian army was marching upon Berlin. They knew that one hundred thousand British soldiers were fighting at their sides, the promise of more to come. They might have realized (in fact, they thought of it very little, since the idea of a prolonged struggle had not yet entered their minds) what a tremendous asset on the Allies' side was England's sea power, which enabled her to besiege Germany and reduce her to starvation. But, take it all in all, the French victory of the Marne was emphatically a victory of nationality, a victory won by the French nation over German imperialism. The Germans failed also in the East. There was no victorious march upon St. Petersburg, following a march upon Paris. A Russian army that had invaded East Prussia was thrown back into Russian territory. A confused warfare followed, neither upon German nor upon properly Russian territory, but upon the plains of Poland, an uninteresting and aimless struggle between German and Russian Imperialism.

There were other parts of what may be called the

European battle-field, where it looked as if the triumph of the Central Empires was, at least temporarily, more decisive; but these triumphs were also the most precarious, just because they were victories won against nationality.

Germany had not declared war in order to conquer Belgium; but man is so made that, when he has got hold of something, he is not prepared to let it go; and, now that practically the whole of Belgium had been occupied by the German army, no responsible statesman in Berlin would, while the war lasted, have admitted the possibility of peace being signed without Belgium being, more or less radically, annexed to Germany. But was the thing feasible? Was it conceivable that Germany could absorb six million foreigners, one part of them French-speaking, none of them German-speaking, with an already long tradition behind them of national independence and democratic government? Germany, if victorious, was bound to make the attempt, and to fail. Such was the Nemesis of victory.

In the South, an Austrian army swept Servia out of existence. The entry of Italy into the War had but insignificant military results. Later on, Roumania in turn joined the Allies, only to be invaded in her entirety. The army which, in 1916, invaded Roumania was in fact a German, not an Austrian, army; and the plains of Hungary would twice have been overrun by the Russians if German assistance had not saved Hungary and Austria from destruction. It was therefore Germany's military power that was the

salvation of Austria. So long as the German armies were there she would be safe from dismemberment. But the German armies could not remain there for ever. As soon as peace was signed, and Germany demobilized, it was highly probable that Austria-Hungary would break into pieces; the peril had only been deferred.

Such was, indeed, the strength of the national idea that Germany found advantage in appealing to it, in order to weaken her enemies materially and morally. The Germans not only denounced French Imperialism in North Africa and British Imperialism in Egypt and India; nearer home, in Europe itself, they found the way to exploit nationalism against Belgium, England, and Russia.

Belgium is, to a certain extent, an artificial nationality. One part of it, the larger part, is Flemish, Teutonic in blood and language; the smaller part is Walloon, and speaks a Romance dialect, the most northern of all the Romance dialects. Germany knew how to play off the Flemings against the Walloons; she created, in the Flemish part of Belgium (with more success than we cared to realize in France and in England), an 'activist' party, which claimed and obtained an administrative division of Belgium into two heterogeneous regions.

Ireland had been, all through the nineteenth century, in a state of chronic rebellion against her Saxon conquerors from England and Scotland. The country in July 1914, just before hostilities began with Germany, was on the very verge of actual civil war. As

soon as war was declared by England upon Germany, mixed feelings of chivalry and political interest made Ireland loyal for a time. But it was for a short time only. Germany began to play the game that France had played in other wars; she made use of the Irish against England. In April 1916 there appeared on the western coasts of Ireland a German auxiliary ship, in conjunction with a German submarine, under the guidance of an English visionary, Sir Roger Casement. The ship was sunk and Casement was arrested, but four days later formidable disturbances broke out in Dublin, where the battle lasted four entire days, with serious loss of property and human life. From this moment the absolute, or practically absolute, independence of Ireland was an issue that could no longer be evaded.

The case of Poland presented the German war-propagandists with a triumphant argument, when they wished to confute the legend that Russia was fighting for the liberty of the Slavs, of all the Slavs. In no part of Poland were the Poles so badly treated as in that which had become Russian, neither in Prussian Poland, where they were at all events free from religious persecution and from subjection to a universal state of barbarous illiteracy, nor in Austria, where they enjoyed complete liberty, both of language and religion. We need not be surprised, therefore, to see Pilsudski, the future Polish Marshal, enlisting in the Austrian army in order to fight for the liberty of Poland; the Central Empires re-establishing full linguistic liberty throughout the whole of that part of

Poland that had formerly been Russian; and in November 1916, when practically the whole of Russian Poland had fallen into the hands of the combined armies of Germany and Austria, both the victorious Governments announcing their intention of immediately transforming these Russian possessions into an independent State with a hereditary Monarchy and a Constitution.

Such was the situation towards the end of 1916. Germany had not gained the lightning victory for which she had gambled in July 1914, and she knew it to be more and more impossible, as the months went by, that she should ever make good her initial failure on the Marne. She was therefore eager for a peace, which in her view would have been a peace of compromise, but which it was impossible for the Allies to see in that light, since Germany was everywhere, to the South as well as to the East and West, in armed occupation of territories belonging to the enemy, and therefore felt herself in a position to dictate the terms of the compromise. At this time begins the second phase of the War, marked by two important events: the United States entered the War; Russia, after a revolution, withdrew from it.

It is useless for me to insist on the importance, in the history of the War, of the first of these two facts. It was the entry of America into the war which, at last, made the victory of the Allies a decisive victory. Until the first weeks of 1917, America, in spite of the British blockade, had persisted in doing her best to

revictual Germany through Scandinavian harbours: in fact, her real quarrel had been, not with Germany, but with England for violating the 'freedom of the seas'. Now, as a result of German recklessness, and of the resolve of the German General Staff to intensify the submarine war against all neutrals (the Americans included), as well as against the Allies, the United States accepted the English conception of the blockade, and rigorously applied all the rules against which they had persistently protested while suffering under them as a neutral power. The isolation of Germany from foreign sources of supply consequently became absolute. Moreover, the appearance in Europe, during the spring of 1918, of millions of young Americans, raw and untrained recruits, no doubt, but young and fresh, made the situation of Germany on the battle-fields hopeless, even before the Allies had had time to carry the war into German territory.

But the Russian Revolution is the historical event of which I should like more particularly to emphasize the importance, for reasons that will appear presently.

In order to understand its antecedents, it is necessary that we should go back to the beginning of the War, when the revolutionary feelings of the working classes seemed powerless in presence of the instinctive appeal of national solidarity. In vain did some individual leaders, or groups of leaders, try to remain doctrinally faithful to the principle of unconditional peace. Those who did so were swept aside by the patriotic enthusiasm of the masses. The majority even of these men were themselves carried away by

the warlike feelings of those around them. And there is this to be said in favour of the Socialists who helped to fight the battles of their respective countries, that some measure of Socialism permeated the policy of all the belligerent countries. Their Governments everywhere found it necessary to bring under control all means of communication and transport, all imports and exports, the mines, and whatever branches of production were necessary for the feeding, clothing, and arming of their armies. Moreover, in order to conciliate the working classes, they took the trade union secretaries into their confidence, and ran the whole of the controlled industries in full and explicit agreement with the workmen's organizations. Some Socialists fondly hoped that the War had worked a miracle and that, when peace returned, Europe would perhaps discover that a permanent régime of State Socialism combined with Syndicalism had come into being without the horrors of revolution, if not without the horrors of war.

The proletariat, however, very rapidly became restless again. The workmen were well paid, but were subject to a system of stern military discipline, and were given to understand, when they complained, that their leaders had signed agreements with the representatives of the different States by which the members of the trade unions renounced the right to strike. Intransigent pacifists came into touch with discontented workmen; and there grew up a body of revolutionary feeling, directed both against capitalism and against war. On the Continent, some of the

revolutionists managed to pass into Switzerland, and there meet and discuss in common the possibilities of a rapid return to peace. Not that they agreed even among themselves. At Zimmerwald in Switzerland, just one year after the Marne, while some internationalists were examining what kind of pressure might be brought to bear upon their respective Governments in favour of peace, they were interrupted by one of them, a man of Mongolian type, indolently stretched upon a sofa. 'Peace! why do you talk of peace? You cannot have peace before you have social revolution! Go home, every one of you, and start the revolution.' 'It is easy enough for you to talk,' answered one of the German delegates, 'you are in exile, and very far indeed from your native country. The only logical thing for you to do would be to go to Russia yourself and start the revolution. But I won't give you that advice, knowing what would happen to me, if I went to Germany and preached revolution. There would be no revolution. But I should be shot next morning.' The other man, not many months later, went to Russia, and did the thing. He was Lenin.

The Russian Revolution began in March 1917, with a general strike of workmen in Petrograd, followed by a general strike of soldiers at the front. It was a revolution which conformed to the Syndicalist and Hervéist plan, a revolution against war and capitalism, conducted by councils of workmen and soldiers, now known throughout the world as Soviets. After a futile attempt to dissolve the Duma, the Tsar

abdicated; and there followed, under the nominal direction of a Provisional Government, six months of universal love, universal anarchy, and murder at every street-corner. A time came when the régime had to end, as all such régimes do, in some kind of dictatorship. There was a first attempt at a *coup d'état* by the military, under Korniloff, which failed, another by the Social-Democratic Bolsheviks, under Lenin, which succeeded. Twelve years have passed, and the proletarian dictators are still in power in Moscow. What were the effects of the Russian Revolution upon the destinies of the War?

In so far as the effects were unfavourable to the cause of the Western Allies, they are obvious. Long and dreary months followed the Revolution in Petrograd, during which it looked as if the results of the Russian defection more than counterbalanced those of America's intervention. On the one hand, more and more German troops were liberated for use on the Western Front, until, after the peace of Brest-Litovsk, in February 1918, there were practically no German troops left in the East. The French, the Italians, the English, and the French again underwent, from April 1917 to May 1918, a succession of severe defeats. In another and more subtle way, Russian revolutionarism exercised a pernicious influence upon the morale of the allied nations in the West. The French and British Governments sent Socialist envoys to Russia with the object of keeping the Russian Socialists faithful, in the name of democratic solidarity, to the cause of the Anti-German

coalition. What happened was that the will to win the war was weakened in the minds of the French and British envoys. They came back converted to the cause of peace, some of them even (the French, if not the English) to the cause of Communism. There were mutinies in the French army in 1917. There were more and more strikes in England, inspired as much by war-weariness as by conscious anti-war propaganda.

But there were other aspects of the Russian Revolution, which should also be taken into account, and which were favourable to the cause of the Allies and to their final victory.

In the first place, the Revolution helped to bring about America's entry into the War. It was on the 3rd February 1917, four days after Germany's announcement of an intensified submarine war, that diplomatic relations were broken off between America and Germany. But war was not declared; and many weeks followed during which the States hesitated to plunge into the conflict. It was only on the 21st March, that is, one week exactly after the abdication of the Tsar, that President Wilson invited Congress to hold an extraordinary session, to begin on the 2nd April; and in his message to Congress, President Wilson sang the praises of the Russian Revolution. The United States were the only great power that had joined in the fray without aims of conquest, either in Europe or elsewhere; they wanted a disinterested and idealistic cause to fight for. It was difficult to represent the War as a war against im-

perialism, so long as one of the Allies—and in some ways the most formidable—presented all the features of oppressive imperialism at its worst. Thanks to the fall of Tsarism, the War could be fought on the democratic lines of President Wilson's 'Fourteen Points'. It is even a question whether President Wilson's programme was not, to a certain extent, directly or indirectly, consciously or not, influenced by the new Russian formula of 'a peace without annexation or indemnity'.

In the second place, Bolshevik influences permeated Germany, just as they permeated France and England; only the permeation was deeper and more direct. In August 1914 the nation (including the Social Democrats) had been practically unanimous in favour of the war. A single eccentric Social Democrat had abstained from giving his approval to the Government, and round him had thereafter clustered a small body of revolutionary extremists, the Spartacists. They became, after March 1917, the nucleus of the German communist party, which copied the Moscow model. As time went on, an ever-increasing minority of Social Democrats had refused to grant to the Government the war credits that it demanded. It was, however, only after the Russian Revolution of March 1917 that they broke away from the majority, and formed a separate party of 'Independent Social Democrats' based on a programme of immediate peace. There was a serious mutiny in the navy in July 1917, the leaders of which were court-marshalled and shot. And the Government, for their part, came

to realize that they must bow before the storm. It now became apparent how precarious was the Bismarckian political constitution of Germany, since it proved unable to resist the strain of a prolonged war or of an incipient defeat. In July 1917 Bethmann-Hollweg resigned, and three phantom ministries in succession leant, each a little more than its predecessor, upon the parties of the Left. Bills were introduced by the Government for the thorough democratization of the Constitution of Prussia, and for the introduction of the principle of ministerial responsibility into the Constitution of the Reich. Finally, when, in the autumn of 1918, the German army in the West had been repeatedly beaten and disaster was in sight, a revolt broke out among the sailors at Kiel. Councils of soldiers and workmen were formed throughout northern Germany. The Kaiser fled to Holland, and the Armistice was signed in November, with a Republican and Socialist German Government. In Austria, where the final catastrophe of the Central Empires really began, there were social and national revolutions combined. What is called the battle of Vittorio Veneto was merely the breaking up of the Austro-Hungarian army into its component elements; each of them rushed back to its separate national home, there to promote the social revolution in Vienna and Budapest, or the national revolution in Prague and Agram.

After protracted negotiations among the Allied and Associated Powers themselves, the Treaty of Versailles was published to the world, and signed by

Germany. Some of the critics of this very much abused document have protested against its revolutionary character, carving brand-new nations out of the old States to whose existence Europe had grown accustomed. The question is how a revolutionary war could end otherwise than in a revolutionary treaty. The treaties that created a free Poland, a free Czecho-Slovakia, a free Jugo-Slavia, that liberated Alsace from Germany and the Trentino from Austria, were based upon the principle of nationality; they represented the triumph of everything that the Liberals of the nineteenth century had fought for. Not that war came to an end with the signature of the treaties. It dragged on in Russia, where you may choose to call it either a civil war between Communism and the Russian enemies of Communism, or a national war, by which Russia asserted her independence, as against what was really the foreign intrusion of England and France. Then Russia, freed from internal peril, endeavoured to transform her defensive wars into an offensive war of Communist propaganda, directed against Poland and Germany. This new war failed under the walls of Warsaw. Perhaps, it may be said that the world-crisis did not really begin in 1914 and come to an end in 1918. It began in October 1912, with the first Balkan War; it came to an end only in August 1920, when the last of the post-war treaties was signed at Sèvres, when the Bolshevik army was defeated in Poland, when an attempt at a Communist revolution in Italy proved abortive, and the rise of Fascism began. Throughout, it had been

a war of nationalities; and the Russian Revolution had acted as a solvent of imperialism for the benefit, not so much of Communism, or even of Socialism, as of nationality.

My tale having come to an end, I should like, in conclusion, to add a few words of warning against a possible misinterpretation. What does my method amount to? I have looked for the 'causes' or 'responsibilities' of the War, not in the acts of individual statesmen, but in collective anonymous forces, against which individual statesmen were powerless. Now, happy as may have been, happy as I think have been on the whole, the European results of the War, it would be absurd not to realize, as the Soviet Government is constantly reminding us—usefully if unpleasantly—that there is still a labour unrest to be appeased, and that there are still oppressed nationalities to be liberated. Should statesmen, then, be content to wait passively until collective anonymous forces once more assert themselves, and a new war, a new revolution—something like a flood or an earthquake—submerges and shakes the world once more? Does my interpretation of history imply the bankruptcy of statesmanship?

It means rather, if you understand me well, a shifting of responsibility for the evils under which mankind labours, from the statesmen to us, the common people, ourselves. The wisdom or folly of our statesmen is merely the reflection of our own wisdom or folly; and, if you agree with me—as I believe you

do—that justice in political affairs should be bought with a smaller waste of property and human lives than is involved in a revolution, a war, or a revolutionary war, you must realize that that result will only be secured after there has been a change in our minds.

Let us substitute a spirit of compromise for a spirit of fanaticism. England, in these matters, does indeed show us the road to peace. For more than two centuries England has had no revolution; it looks as if she were, so far as it is possible to pass such sweeping judgements upon human affairs, safe for ever from the peril of revolution. Modern English history thus proves that it is possible to extirpate class and party fanaticism. Why not make an attempt to use British methods to solve the problem of war as well as of revolution? The institution of the League of Nations is such an attempt. In Geneva, representatives of all nations are invited to meet, and try to solve in a spirit of compromise problems that until now have been solved only by war; and, if they fail, to submit to the arbitration, counsel, or command of the Parliament of Man.

But compromise is not enough. National fanaticism is something far more formidable than class fanaticism. England has eliminated the one, but not the other. She may have been, during two centuries, a nation without a revolution; it can hardly be said that she has not been a warlike nation. Even during the last quarter of a century, when mankind has seemed more anxious than ever before to find some way out of war through arbitration and compromise,

has any government, that of England included, subscribed to any Peace Pact, even to the Covenant of the League of Nations, without making, explicitly or implicitly, some reservation? I stumbled, only the other day, upon a debate which took place in the House of Commons a few months before the War, the protagonists being the well-known Irish free lance, Tim Healy, and Lord Hugh Cecil. 'What is nationality?' interrupted Lord Hugh Cecil. 'I will tell the noble lord,' answered Tim Healy, 'what nationality is. Nationality is a thing which man is ready to die for.' Aye, and to kill for also, and there 's the rub. But the fact remains, that man is not wholly made up of common sense and self-interest: such is his nature that he does not think life worth living if there is not something for which he is ready to lose his life. Now I see that millions have been ready, during the great world-crisis, to give their lives for their respective countries. How many millions, hundreds of thousands, thousands, hundreds—would even a hundred be ready to die for the League of Nations? Well, this is a serious matter. So long as we have not evolved a fanaticism of humanity, strong enough to counterbalance, or absorb, the fanaticisms of nationality, let us not visit our sins upon our statesmen. Let us rather find reasons for excusing them, if they occasionally feel compelled to submit to the pressure of our disinterested and fanatical emotions.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, OXFORD
BY JOHN JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY